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DEPARTMENT FOR DS/CC, DS/DSS/ITA, DS/DSS/ATA, S/CT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC PGOV PTER PHUM JO

SUBJECT: QAFQAFA PRISON RIOT BY TAKFIRI ISLAMISTS

REF: AMMAN 1503

¶1. (SBU) On April 13, at approximately 0900 hours (local), a riot took place in Qafqafa prison, located near Irbid approximately fifty miles north of Amman. According to RSO sources in the Public Security Directorate (PSD), the riot occurred when PSD officers assigned to the prison attempted to conduct routine searches of the prisoners' cells. Similar searches were reportedly being conducted simultaneously in other prisons as well. The Qafqafa prisoners, among whom were radical Islamists believing in Takfiri ideology, reportedly responded by rioting. The prisoners threw hot water with bleach at PSD officers' faces and took two PSD officers as hostages. According to PSD sources, Qafqafa was the only prison which experienced inmate rioting this morning.

¶2. (SBU) According to PSD sources, the Takfiri prisoners refused to negotiate. Consequently, PSD special police forcefully responded using tear gas. One prisoner died (cause of death unknown) and ten PSD officers were injured. The two hostages were liberated, and the prison situation was calm as of 1100 hours (local).

¶3. (U) According to media reports, an inmate named Abu Muhammad Al-Tahhawi spoke to Al-Jazeera by mobile phone from inside the prison during the riot. Al-Tahhawi confirmed that the prisoners were holding two police officers as hostages. He claimed that the hostages were taken when the police tried to "break into" prison after morning prayers to take two inmates.

¶4. (SBU) According to PSD, Al-Tahhawi is a Takfiri leader at Qafqafa prison, and he is suspected by PSD of leading the riot. Al-Tahhawi was reportedly injured and has been hospitalized.

¶5. (U) This is the second incidence of rioting in Jordanian prisons in the last six weeks. Previously, riots took place in Swaqa, Jweida and Qafqafa prisons (REFTEL) following the authorities' attempt to remove and execute two Islamist prisoners responsible for the assassination of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley in October 2002.

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